

mound ran southwards 14 yards to a mound, then north-westwards 47 yards to another mound, which was in turn connected to a fourth mound 67 yards away north of west, whence the trail continued another 33 yards to the north-west. Another trail to the south-west connected a side-mound after 13 yards, a further side-mound after another 59 yards, and a smaller side-mound after 6 yards. In another case a side-mound was connected to the main mound by a trail 73 yards long. From each side-mound trails of scouts extended into the bush. It is hoped to make an accurate survey of the whole colony at a later stage. Thanks are due to the Government Entomologist for determining the species.

—J. GENTILI and V. N. SERVENTY, Perth.

Growth of the Blackboy.—Some 30 years ago I took notice of many clumps of blackboys as to their height and length of their branches. These today are some three feet longer or higher. Many now are straggly plants breaking off with the length. In 1913 I chopped the head out of a single-stemmed blackboy. It recovered and today has three branches, three feet long. In another case some young ones came up on a piece of land that had been ploughed; one survived 25 years but died after a fire had got it, when it was about the size of the crown of a hat. I have often seen a wisp of new leaves or rushes grow from the stump of one cut down but not to survive long, for cattle eat these when young. Actually I believe the blackboy grows a foot in 10 years. The flattened leaf stem that forms the peel of the plant is for some years loosely packed but in course of time becomes tightly packed under stress of pressure on expansion of the heart growth and compression downwards by a new growth of top. This accounts for a slowing up appearance. A blackboy hardly grows at all where stock can get at its young tops but if it is beyond their reach it grows comparatively quickly. Also in unsuitable soils and weather conditions it may always be a short stunted, slow-growing plant. The soil that suits it is the deep black loam between granite rocks among the hills, associated with red gum or marri trees.

—J. M. HARVEY, Thomson's Brook.

Tree Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans*) Nesting in Wooden Buildings.—On July 26, 1947, I noted a number of Tree Martins under shop verandahs at Perenjori. This behaviour on the part of these birds seemed unusual, but I concluded that a sheltered perch was the only attraction. When I next visited Perenjori, on September 5, Tree Martins were again in evidence and were apparently breeding. One bird was observed at a nest under a shop verandah. The site was a narrow recess between two rafters. A considerable amount of mud had been used to build up the front of the nest, which, in fact, superficially resembled that of a Welcome Swallow (*Hirundo neoxena*), except that it was built on the top of a beam and not on a vertical support. Martins were again noted under verandahs at Perenjori on July 17, 1948.

Tree Martins were apparently breeding under the eaves of the hotel at Morawa when I visited that town on August 29, 1948.

Individuals were noted carrying mud. That the birds were breeding was confirmed by Mr. S. R. White, of Morawa.

A third group nesting under shop verandahs was located at Northampton on September 18, 1948 by several members of the R.A.O.U.

These are the only occasions upon which I have found Tree Martins nesting in wooden buildings.

—ERIC H. SEDGWICK, Caron.

A Record of the Leopard Seal in Western Australia.—The Leopard Seal (*Hydrurga leptonyx*) is an occasional wanderer to southern Australian seas from the Antarctic, but though many records have been reported from the south-east of the continent, there has been none so far from Western Australia. The first undoubted observation of an individual of this species locally was recently reported to Mr. G. W. Rayner of the C.S.I.R., and myself by Mr. D. S. Hunt of Hunt's Canning Company. Mr. Hunt said that on October 12, 1948, he was patrolling the south coast beaches in his Moth aeroplane, searching for salmon shoals. When flying over Tooregullup Beach, about one mile south of the Gairdner River bar (just north of Doubtful Island Bay), he saw a group of people tugging at the tail of a curious seal-like animal. He circled around and made a landing on the beach. The persons there called the animal a leopard seal and said they had come on it lying on the beach, clear of the water. It slowly moved off as they approached and they endeavoured to hold it by grasping its tail. However the creature escaped and swam away vigorously. It made no attempt to bite at its would-be captors.

Mr. Hunt describes the animal as being about 11 feet in length, of a brownish-grey colour, dappled on the sides of the body with darker spots. It looked like a seal but appeared thinner and longer. The head was much bigger than a seal's and seemed disproportionately large compared with the size of the body. The two front flippers also seemed small for the body size. "A curious aspect of the animal was that its tail appeared to be not unlike that of a platypus." The teeth were large and formidable. Mr. Hunt at once recognised the photograph in Fig. 14 of *The Wild Animals of Australasia*, by A. S. Le Souef and H. Burrell, as portraying the creature.

—D. L. SERVENTY, Perth.

A Bull-ant Combat.—On June 19, 1948 about 5 p.m., while taking a bush walk I came on several nests of the bull-ant, known under a variety of local names such as sergeant ant, soldier ant, bulldog, inch ant and jumping ant (*Myrmeciu vindex*). They were a short distance apart and in most cases the ants were out foraging in the pleasant evening sunshine. At one nest I noticed two ants, one of which seemed to be trying to drag the other with it, over leaves and sticks, up a small prickly bush and down again to the